

The Staring Contest

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Summary: Years before the Avengers. After being brought in by Hawkeye, Natasha Romanov is forced to attend a S.H.I.E.L.D. training facility. During one of her lunch breaks she sees a familiar face. Short one shot. Rated T just in case.

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Years before the Avengers. After being brought in by Hawkeye, Natasha Romanov is forced to attend a S.H.I.E.L.D. training facility. During one of her lunch breaks she sees a familiar face.

****AN:** This is my first attempt at writing a fan fiction so any constructive criticism is appreciated.**

This was humiliating! Degrading even! A total embarrassment! She was a world class spy and an unrivalled assassin.

She had gone through years of the most intense training there was. She was Natasha Romanov. The Black Widow. She was a weapon. A fine-tuned tool of espionage and assassination.

Yet here she was, in a S.H.I.E.L.D. training facility wearing a trainee uniform. She knew that her choices had been either this or an arrow through the head but at the moment, that arrow was looking very appealing.

Especially as she saw the other trainees walk past her on their way into the cafeteria. She had chosen her spot carefully, being in the corner allowed her an obstructed view of the wide open cafeteria without having to move her head, it was out of the way so there was little chance of someone trying to sit with her and best of all, the overhead lights didn't fully reach the corner allowing her to sit mostly in the shadows.

From her spot she could see all while making it as difficult as possible to be seen herself. And what she could see did not impress her. The people before her were meant to be the best of the best, but as she watched them chatter noisily and call out across tables as they ate she was reminded more of high-school students than professionals.

As she continued to sweep the large area with her calculating stare she came across something that managed to hold her attention, or rather, someone. Unlike the other people that crowded the room, he did not look away when their gazes met.

It only took her a moment to recognise him, after all he wasn't someone she would forget soon. There were few people on this Earth that could take her down and this man had managed to work his way onto that short list. He was Clint Barton. He was the reason she was here. The one who had offered her the ultimatum. Join S.H.I.E.L.D. or join the legion of souls she had sent to the afterlife.

Like her, he had taken up residence in one of the room's corners and had ended up in the one directly opposite her. Unlike her, he was not wearing a trainee uniform and was instead in his civvies. And he still hadn't stopped staring at her, except it wasn't quite a stare. It was somewhere between a stare and a glare.

_Was there even a word for that? _She thought to herself.

Never one to ever turn away a challenge, she returned the stare.

He was most likely harbouring some hostility towards her. Maybe it was about the window she kicked him through, or the chair she broke on him. She would have thought that the bookshelf he dropped on her would have made them even but it seems some people had a problem letting go of things.

Noticing that her opponent was yet to even react in the slightest she turned her stare into a glare. Despite herself she could feel a smirk coming on. This glare could make even the most hardened members of the Spetsnaz, the Russian special forces, flinch away, there was no way this man could withstand it.

_No! _

_This isn't possible! _

This man, this agent, hadn't even moved!

Who the hell is this guy? Everything else in the room faded out. All the noise and all the other people were ignored as she focused all her attention on Clint Barton as her glare escalated to glacial proportions.

Minutes had passed since she had last blinked but that didn't matter. As she focused more and more on the assassin across from her she poured all her anger, all her stress from the week she had spent in this shit hole of an academy into her glare.

The more she glared the more she realised that she didn't even care about winning this stupid staring contest any more, she just wanted to force some sort of reaction from her opponent and she would not be

stopped.

"Trainee Romanov!" The clear and authoritarian voice cut through her concentration and snapped her out of her contest.

Dammit! Whoever had said that had caused her to lose without being able to achieve her goal. She turned to give the interloper a piece of her mind and few broken bones. That was until she realised who it was.

Standing before her was Maria Hill, Nick Fury's second in command. Any action against her and she wouldn't make it out of the room alive. Hill looked down at her with an expression that managed to be both annoyed and unimpressed. Swallowing her anger and her pride she replied "Yes ma'am?"

"I think it's about time you finished up your lunch break." The connotation was obvious, _leave the room now_.

She was confused by this statement, that is, until she took another look at the cafeteria. Where before there had been loud conversation and people moving all over the place, there was now silence as not a single person moved.

In fact, there was a clear channel between her and Barton, where everyone sitting in the way had vacated their seats. Without another word Natasha rose to her feet and walked out.

As she walked there was only one thing on her mind, Clint Barton. Hawkeye. The name seemed even more fitting now. After bringing her in, he had had her attention, now he had her interest. And he might just regret it.

Maria Hill let out an exasperated sigh as the former Russian agent left, before turning back to the cafeteria where the trainees were slowly relaxing now that Romanov had left.

Seriously, these people were meant to be on their way to being the best of the best, yet here they were acting like a bunch of scared school children.

While she wanted nothing more than to go back to her office and get on with some work that was actually important, there was still one thing one thing she had to sort out in here.

As she made her way to the opposite corner of the cafeteria she had to make an effort to resist letting out a shiver as she saw Agent Barton's expression. As Agent Coulson had once so eloquently put it 'the man has the resting bitch face of an angry serial killer'. She stopped moving about a meter away from the agent and said only one word.

"Barton."

As if waking up from a trance, the aforementioned man shook his head and blinked vigorously as if he hadn't done so for several minutes. He probably hadn't.

"Oh, hey Hill" he said in a relaxed tone "didn't see you there."

Deciding to cut straight to the point to avoid spending any more time here than she had to she asked "Mind explaining what you were doing?" Unlike Barton her tone was not relaxed and made it clear what she said was not a request but a command.

"I was just thinking." A single raised eyebrow was all the signal he got to elaborate. "I know this might sound crazy, but hear me out." _This ought to be good._ "Boomerang arrows." Barton revealed as he held out his arms like he had just had a brilliant idea.

Maria Just turned and left the archer sitting there. She should have known it was something ridiculous. As she walked away she could feel her headache building as she tried to ignore Barton calling out and asking what was so bad about his idea.

End.

**AN: Thank you for taking your time to read this. **

End
file.